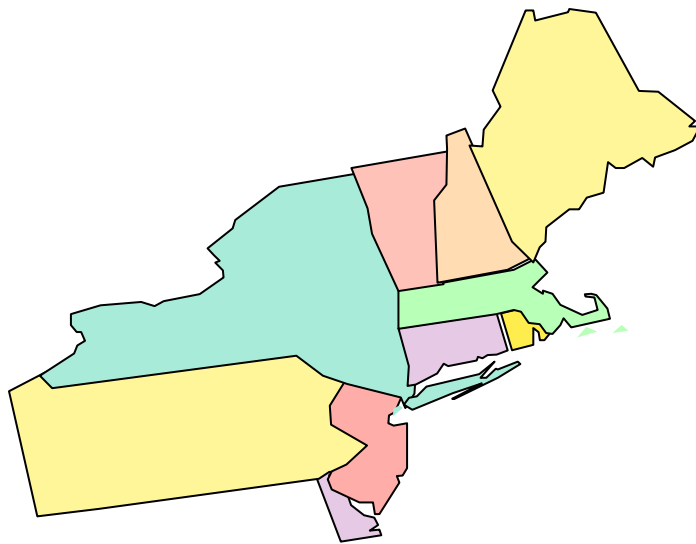


North Eastern Summary

2004 USDA Data Users Meeting



**November 4, 2004
Albany, New York**

**National Agricultural Statistics Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250**

	2004 North Eastern Data Users Meeting November 4, 2004 Clarion Hotel	
Agenda		
9:30 a.m.	Registration.	
10:30 a.m.	Opening Remarks	Rich Allen Deputy Administrator, Programs and Products
	Survey Procedures	Joe Prusacki Chief, Crops Branch
	Agricultural Census	Rich Allen Deputy Administrator, Programs and Products
	Data Dissemination	Jaki McCarthy Marketing and Information Services Office
	Fed/State Cooperation	Joe Reilly Deputy Administrator, Field Operations
12:00 p.m.	Lunch	Box Lunches in the meeting room
12:25 p.m.	Opening Remarks	Nathan Rudgers, Commissioner New York State Dept of Ag & Mkts
12:30 p.m.		Open forum for questions and comments from participants
		http://www.usda.gov/nass/

**Summary of Questions and Comments
Albany, New York Data Users Meeting
November 4, 2004**

Note: The following write-up presents a summary of all issues discussed. Material is presented in an essentially chronological order—except that comments from Nathan Rudgers, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets are presented first even though some questions had arisen during the morning National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) procedures presentations before his remarks.

Topic summary labels have been used to separate different themes. A written summary received from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture is included, although most points were introduced for discussion from the floor. An outline of equine information requests provided by George King of the New York Horse Council is also included.

Comments from Commissioner Nathan Rudgers: Commissioner Rudgers started his remarks by opining that evaluating agricultural production in the future should not involve just measuring production outputs. He asked NASS to consider changing from its present farms base to an agricultural land base. The changing nature of land ownership is threatening agriculture in the Northeast. Similar changes are surely occurring in other parts of the country but the impacts are not as evident since larger percentages of the land in other areas are still in production agriculture.

The Commissioner clarified that is not talking just about loss of land to strip malls and housing developments. His concerns extend to private parties who buy formerly productive agricultural land, plop down a nice house, and then try to figure out what to do with the rest of the land. He applauded Steve Ropel of the New York NASS office for designing a new survey which will follow up recent changes in ownership to determine what has happened to the land. He hopes the survey will reveal the characteristics of the new owners and what they intend to do with their land. The ultimate hope from the Department of Agriculture and Markets is that the new land owners will continue to use land for agricultural purposes.

Commissioner Rudgers stated that some “agricultural” uses of land don’t get measured, since they are not classified as agricultural under the North American Industry Classification System. Some recently sold land may end up as horse boarding stables or private ownership of a few horses on land that is not being “farmed” in the conventional sense. He urged NASS to work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) which is responsible for the Natural Resources Inventory surveys and the Forest Service to more fully measure agricultural land use.

The Commissioner also stated that there is a need to more fully measure all agricultural economic activities related to farms. For example, activities such as corn mazes, hunting leases, and processing produce from the farm for direct sales might not be fully measured under present Census of Agriculture (Census) and survey approaches. NASS offices serving every state should work with Extension specialists to identify operations involved in such activities that may not be on the present list sampling frames. The New York Department of Agriculture and Markets has

always gotten good feedback and cooperation from Extension in trying to identify non-typical agricultural efforts.

Commissioner Rudgers also asked NASS to look closely at farm labor issues to determine how many people are actually working on farms and how wage rates vary within and across states and types of farms. He stressed that it is still important to collect useful cost of production data for traditional enterprises such as dairy. He feels that NASS and the Economic Research Service need to work closely with Extension specialists and groups such as the Dairy Herd Improvement Association to be sure that relevant information is being collected. Accurate benchmarks are needed.

In summary, the Commissioner repeated his message of focusing on the land. If the land still seems to be agricultural in nature, it should be counted. He stressed that NASS confidentiality protection of farmer's proprietary data is vital but encouraged the Agency to work closely with health and homeland security officials in every state to be able to help agriculture respond if a crisis arises. He finished with a supposition that some land that might not normally be considered a farm might qualify under the \$1,000 definition when hunting leases and other non-typical activities are fully measured.

Sampling List Sharing: Daniel Carroll of the U.S. Department of Labor commented that he understood part B of the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (CIPSEA) allowed the major statistical agencies of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Bureau of the Census (BOC), Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), and NASS to share list sampling frames. That was not mentioned earlier in the seminar. Does NASS now exchange lists with the other agencies?

Rich Allen of NASS Headquarters responded that some past confidentiality proposals, which were not enacted, had included NASS with other agencies. NASS did not request to be included in the list sharing and the final CIPSEA wording on that provision excludes NASS. The new provision should be particularly advantageous to BOC and BLS which have each been maintaining business (non-farm) establishment lists. BEA does not conduct surveys so the new list sharing provision might not affect it as much.

Evaluating Conservation Programs: Richard Warner of the Northeast Pasture Consortium asked what was covered by the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP). Rich Allen clarified that the last Farm Bill included a number of conservation programs to be implemented by the NRCS and the Farm Service Agency (FSA), plus a provision that the effectiveness and the benefits of the programs be evaluated.

CEAP has two different approaches. NASS is helping with the National Assessment by conducting annual farmer surveys based on sampling points which have been included in the National Resource Inventory (NRI) survey that NRCS has conducted in the past. The interviews will demonstrate how cropping and conservation practices changed over the previous 5 years. Survey results will be analyzed through environmental models created by NRCS, the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) of USDA, and Texas A&M. There is a separate CEAP

watershed assessment portion which will involve ARS, NRCS, and the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service.

Farm Worker Estimates and the Census of Agriculture: Daniel Carroll commented that he often gets questions on how many farm workers there are in specific states because he is in charge of the Department of Labor's National Agricultural Workers Survey program and people assume he collects farm worker data. He often refers people to the Census as the best benchmark, even though it is just once every five years. However, he cautions people that the Census numbers might be understated and overstated at the same time. They can be overreported because some part-time workers might work on multiple farms in a year's time and are thus duplicated. (He stated that the practice of working on multiple farms is declining.) Underreporting comes in when operations hire an agricultural service company which provides the labor and the operator may not even know how many people are being employed. Daniel commented that he worked in the past with retiree Jack Runyan, who was the USDA Farm Labor Issues Coordinator. He and Jack often commiserated on their common frustrations in trying to fully answer farm labor questions.

Daniel said it would be helpful to improve the Census benchmark data if some ways could be found to minimize the overcounting and undercounting. However, he did not see how it could be done without extensive interviews to identify people on multiple farms and to measure how many people were in the agricultural services crews.

Daniel pointed out that his concerns were not just about measurement of migrant laborers. Rich Allen clarified that the USDA *Farm Labor Survey* definition of a migrant laborer is one who does not return home at night. Thus, college students working for combine operators who go from state to state for the wheat harvest would be migrant workers for that summer. Daniel commented that the Department of Labor definition of a migrant worker would be someone traveling 75 miles to work, even if they got home at night. The Department of Education definition of migrant worker is someone who passes one school district to get to a job. Daniel said he likes the approach that NASS used in the *2002 Census of Agriculture* Section 21, with its definitions.

Rich pointed out there have been efforts to collect more detailed information on the types of migrant workers who do move around the country every year, often with their whole family in tow. However, it was extremely difficult to create a sampling frame which could identify individuals or families at various locations during the year. Daniel commented that there are multiple U.S. Government programs aimed at improving the well being of farm workers and their dependents. The Big Four programs are:

Department of Labor's National Farm Jobs Program, with outlays of \$77 million,
Department of Health and Human Service's Migrant Health Program at \$139 million,
Department of Health and Human Service's Migrant Head Start funding at \$263 million,
Department of Education's Migrant Education Program funded at \$394 million.

Equine Statistics and the Census of Agriculture: George King of the New York Horse Council commented that it was unfortunate to try and cover the major agricultural activity of

equine as just one line in Section 12 (Other Animals) on the Census questionnaire. Steve Ropel of the NASS New York Office stated that the Commissioner and many other people would prefer to account for all horses but the Census is specifically covering just horses on farms.

George King said it was interesting that one agency of USDA, NRCS, has some responsibilities for Confined Animal Feeding Operations, but the rest of USDA doesn't count horse stables. Joe Reilly of NASS Headquarters clarified that the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) includes horse boarding operations under "Entertainment and Recreation," not Agriculture. Rich Allen pointed out that the horses on a place which boards horses would be counted if the place was producing hay or some crops and otherwise qualified as a farm. George King said that some "new" equine operations do qualify for the NASS definition since they start producing their own hay but many do not grow any crops at all.

George then asked if a cattle feedlot is counted as a farm. Rich Allen answered that it would, since the animals are being fed for slaughter as meat. George responded that agriculture is not just food and fiber and a horse "feeding" operation should be counted if a cattle feeding operation is.

Marc Tosiano of the Pennsylvania NASS office pointed out that receipts from horse racing activities are also classified under Entertainment and not Agriculture. Steve Ropel commented that NRCS is continually broadening its role in working with environmental issues. It is possible that horse boarding operations may now be included within the NRCS manure management programs.

Joe Reilly asked what approach Statistics Canada uses for tracking equine operations. Lynda Kemp answered that there are similar issues in counting all horses through the Canadian Census for the same reasons that have been mentioned. The primary one is that many horses reside at non-farm locations. Marc Tosiano asked how boarding and similar operations were handled by Statistics Canada. Lynda responded that they do cover boarding stables since many are involved in agricultural activity.

George King commented that there has been a new look at horse operations in New York. Boarding operations have been defined as qualifying for State agriculture programs. Linda Hutton of NASS Headquarters suggested that organizations such as George's may want to work with the NAICS people to appeal for a new interpretation.

Rich Allen asked George if he has used the special state equine surveys that several NASS offices have conducted. Rich clarified that the NASS state offices do extra list building to add nonfarm equine operations to the survey list and normally add additional area sampling segments around cities and towns to form a better estimate of "home owner" horses. George responded that he has used all of the special reports and found them useful but New York was the best one. A 50-state program is still needed. He thinks it will be easier to do if a full animal identification program with premise Id's is put in place.

Price Data by Product End Uses: Chris LaRoe of the New York Farm Bureau Federation commented that he agrees with the interest in better horse statistics. He also stated that accurate

crop prices are needed for risk management programs with fruit and vegetable prices broken out by end use such as fresh market and processing.

Jim Smith of NASS Headquarters clarified that vegetable prices are broken out at the end of the year into fresh market and processing. Fruit is broken out into juice, applesauce, canning, etc. However, some price data can not be published at the state level since there may be only one or two processors. Another issue that comes up is that the Risk Management Agency (RMA) may want to offer insurance coverage in all states, but NASS normally covers only states that have one percent or more of U.S. production.

Steve Ropel added that RMA is trying to get so precise that they would like to have average prices for fresh market roadside and pick-your-own sales which we currently don't estimate. Rich Allen commented that there is also interest in organic prices for all categories. Chris LaRoe asked if Extension Service can help supply the price data. Rich responded that Extension Service may be in touch with many organic and pick-your-own operators but they rarely have average price data.

Animal Identification Systems and NASS: George King asked what the NASS policy was regarding animal identification systems. Rich Allen said it might be best to first clarify the USDA approach. USDA does not want to require a particular solution (specific ear tags, electronic tags, etc.) but has defined the elements that are needed in state AIS systems. USDA does have some funding available to help states set up pilot tests. NASS wants to help state agencies that are setting up the systems with file handling and maintenance assistance. In exchange, NASS would want to be able to use file summary information to provide improved livestock estimates.

Joe Reilly commented that NASS did send letters, on behalf of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), to the NASS livestock producers lists to encourage cooperation with the AIS efforts. NASS did not give APHIS the name and address file.

George King said the AIS approach may provide a new data source that will be compared to NASS data. Rich Allen commented that North Carolina already has a State Department of Agriculture system that geographically locate all broiler and hog production facilities. Those locations had to be made available under State Freedom of Information provisions. Thus, the locations are known but the counts of livestock are not necessarily always up-to-date.

George said that the State of Mississippi is already employing an identification chip system. Lynda Kemp of Statistics Canada said that, for food safety and traceability reasons, Canada has been tagging cattle for some time. Currently, Canadian producers tag all cattle (this has been since July 2001—in January 2005 radio frequency tags will replace bar coded tags) and sheep (since January 2004). Soon hogs will be part of the program (target date, summer 2006). The Canadian Cattle Identification Agency coordinates these activities.

Lynda went on to say that tagging information will not likely prove to be a good administrative source for livestock estimates for a number of reasons:

- it may be known how many tag have been issued but don't know how many have been installed. (Some farmers may install tags at birth, while others may install them just before they go to market.)
- if a tagged animal dies, it doesn't "come out of" the system.
- on the plus side, when a tagged animal goes to slaughter, the abbatoir reports the tag number to the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency database

Organic Data and the Census of Agriculture: Evelina Panayotova of the Rodale Institute stated that there are many needs for organic data. Much more is needed than just a count of certified organic operations or total acreage. Information is needed to interpret current trends and to evaluate yields under organic practices. NASS picked up the amount of direct sales to consumers in the last Census. Can those sales be broken out by organic and traditional? Joe Prusacki of NASS Headquarters replied that such a breakout is not currently in the testing plan.

Linda Hutton commented it would be possible to use responses to the Census organic questions to identify operations to survey for more details—if funding was provided. Rich Allen commented that considerable increases in sample sizes would be needed to separate organic estimates from traditional production estimates on major crop surveys.

Evelina pointed out that NASS should not just focus on certified organic operations. There are many small organic operations which have developed specific niches but will not go for certification. Joe Prusacki commented that NASS realizes that not all operations will be certified. Testing plans will include panels to compare certified, transition, and non-certified organic operations. Lynda Kemp of Statistics Canada commented that they also tested using all three definitions for their Ag Census.

Evelina commented that transition operations definitely know who they are. Joe Prusacki said the panels will try to pick up more on the value received and amount of land used than just that an operation is organic. Evelina commented that many farmers' market associations have a service that provides contact information for organic products and pick-your-own products by zip codes. That approach could be used for list building.

Steve Ropel asked Evelina if data just every five years would be often enough. She said it would be a start—if good data were provided.

Jim Smith commented that it is hard to find the small, non-certified organic farms. They may not show up on any common list sources. NASS also needs access to lists that do exist. He understands that someone in the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is now to be the keeper of the certified organic lists. However, he has heard that AMS may not be able to provide lists without getting permission from the state certifying agencies. Marc Tosiano said it will be particularly hard to find the non-certified operations.

Steve Ropel commented that the Dairy Cost of Production Survey coming up for 2006 might include an organic component. The New York Department of Agriculture and Markets wants to increase the New York sample size to get better data. Jaki McCarthy of NASS Headquarters pointed out that NASS does have the capability to do custom surveys, when funded. Richard

Warner commented that the New York data will be helpful but that type of detail is needed for all states.

Rich Allen commented that a new USDA committee is looking at organic farming. However, the focus is mainly on farm program and crop insurance issues. For example, it may be assumed that one reason for organic products commanding a higher price is that more hand operations are required to protect and harvest the crop. One issue that has arisen is if an organic producer suffers an early season loss from hail – before any extra cropping activities have occurred – is there any justification for a higher loss payment than for a conventional grower?

Internet Use Questions and the Census of Agriculture: Evelina Panayotova commented that she thought the internet question should be kept on the 2007 Census but expanded to see how the internet is specifically being used for marketing farm products. Linda Hutton pointed out that computer and internet user questions are asked every two years (odd numbered year) on the NASS June survey which provides state level estimates. The questions include whether the internet is used to sell products or to purchase inputs. Marc Tosiano clarified that the June questions haven't gone into the details of how the internet is used for marketing products.

Census of Horticulture Specialties: Marc Tosiano raised an issue on horticulture data which had been submitted by the New Jersey State Department of Agriculture. Since the 2005 Census of Horticulture Specialties will not be conducted, will there be a nursery survey in 2005? Jim Smith verified that the Census of Horticulture Specialties used to be every 10 years but NASS had hoped to go to a 5-year rotation, following each Census of Agriculture. Joe Reilly added that the 2005 collection was identified as a specific initiative since it was not in the original Census cycle but it was cut out by Congress. Joe added that the Census of Horticulture Specialties will now not be in the budget cycle until 2010.

Jim Smith outlined the total ongoing horticulture program. A floriculture survey in 36 states (focusing on larger operations) is conducted annually. Nursery production surveys, along with chemical use data, were conducted in 2000 and 2003 for 17 states. Those surveys were essentially censuses of the horticulture operations in each state, but the surveys did not ask all of the questions intended for the Census of Horticulture Specialties. NASS wants to avoid making another major horticulture contact in a Census year.

Treatment of Improved Pastures: Richard Warner said he would like to look to NRCS to see if grazing may be a “best management” practice under the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP). There is also an organic grass based agriculture movement. It does need special attention since it is a “traditional” approach. Steve Ropel mentioned there will be too few sampling points to get annual state level inferences from CEAP but perhaps some conclusions could be reached across multiple years.

Marc Tosiano asked Richard Warner what pasture improvement information he would be looking for under CEAP. Richard said it was basically who does it, how many acres are involved, and what special practices they are using. Richard said there was some information included in the Dairy Business Summaries but not by locality. Steve Ropel cautioned that the Dairy Business Summaries are not random samples of dairies.

Rich Allen commented that NASS has made good progress in measuring dry and green forage and hopes to complete that effort by adding more states under its program modifications. Richard Warner said NASS now needs to expand to mechanical harvesting and “animal” harvesting of forage.

Dairy Operations Data and the Census of Agriculture. Kathy Kelly of the USDA Federal Milk Market Order office said they would like more detailed breakouts of dairy operations in the Census. This would be specific summaries for all dairy operations. Nathan Crisp of NASS Headquarters pointed out that some additional data are already summarized in U.S. and State tables 59, which present information by NAICS code. However, those tables summarize only operations which have a predominance of income from dairy. To get a cross tabulation of all dairy operations, a special summary is needed. That could be done in the NASS data lab or it might be basic enough that state offices could create summaries. Steve Ropel said he has run New York county comparison tables for dairy but he hasn’t done the disclosure checking to identify data totals which can’t be released. He could work with Kathy to see what data they wanted summarized. Marc Tosiano commented that he knew the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board would be interested in the same types of summaries.

Vineyard and Orchard Surveys: Marc Tosiano raised another question on behalf on the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, asking what it will take to get a new vineyard and orchard survey. Jim Smith pointed out that NASS had tried to set up a 5-year rotation survey to include some states each year but lost the funding. NASS has now identified a 4-year rotation, which would skip the Census year. Jim said the “survey” is usually a census of every grower known by the state. Rich Allen pointed out that states can add resources to get more information when the survey is conducted. Jim Smith said examples of more information were detailed breakouts of dwarf and semi-dwarf trees and adding more grape varieties within a state.

Agri-tourism and Value Added Products and the Census of Agriculture: Marc Tosiano said the New Jersey Department of Agriculture also would like more information collected on Agri-tourism. Developing Agri-tourism might make a difference for operations being able to generate enough farm income to stay in the business of farming. They would also like more information on value added activities on farms.

Goat Statistics and the Census of Agriculture: The New Jersey Department of Agriculture would also like to separate out meat goats from other goats in the next Census. Nathan Crisp said NASS is going to a 3-way classification of angora, milk goats, and meat and other goats starting in January 2005.

Census of Aquaculture: The New Jersey Department also wanted to know if a Census of Aquaculture would be conducted in 2005-2006. Joe Reilly said it would be conducted, if the budgeted funding holds up. New Jersey would like aquatic plants to be added to the aquaculture section, with a breakout of food and non-food (ornamentals). Joe Reilly commented that this is again likely a situation in which the requested information falls under a different NAICS code. In this case, aquatic plants likely fall under Horticulture.

Agri-terrorism Plans and the Census of Agriculture: The New Jersey Department also would add information to the Census to determine if farmers have Agri-terrorism response plans. Marc Tosiano said there has been a lot of effort by Pennsylvania state agencies to develop Bio-security plans which are even broader. Lynda Kemp commented that, although most issues that have been discussed today are similar to what they hear in Canada, Agri-terrorism was the one issue never mentioned in their content meetings.

2007 Census of Agriculture Questionnaire Status: Daniel Carroll asked where NASS is in the process of 2007 Census input. Joe Prusacki answered that NASS is about finished with evaluation of the performance of all 2002 questions. A mailing was made to some 400 organizations and individuals asking for input. NASS is going through those responses, along with additional opinions that NASS state offices have picked up.

Panels are being set up to test the wording of different questionnaire versions. Testing will first be done with small groups in preparation for a full pilot test at the end of 2005. Final submission to the Office of Management and Budget is planned for October 2006.

Farmer Provided Farm Worker Housing and the Census of Agriculture: Daniel Carroll asked if anyone had suggested adding a Census question on farmer provided farm worker housing. Joe Prusacki acknowledged that such a suggestion had not come up.

Equine Data Needs

Outline Prepared by George King, New York Horse Council

Types of Reports Needed

- State by State Census-like Criteria
 - Breeding
 - Boarding/Teaching
 - Backyard Horses
 - Other
- National Recap
- Farmland in Equine uses
 - Acreage over years
- Agricultural prices (As livestock and for slaughter)
- Costs for Boarding Services
- Other types of income from the operation

Animal ID System—Interconnections?

- How can AIS be used to increase samples for surveys
- Can AIS provide more detailed reports

Why are Equine Data Needed?

- Insurance Data
- Legislative Actions
- Environmental Impacts
- New Farmers' Assistance (start-up programs, loans, etc.)
- Knowledge of Volatility
- Keeping animals away from slaughter by tracking prices
- Business plans—for the whole industry
- Tracking prices

Comments for the Northeast Data User's Meeting from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture

All of the comments from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture are for data items, not currently available, that we would like to have more information about. These items could be added to any survey instrument where they would appropriately fit.

1. The state of New Jersey would like to have some additional information about agro-tourism. Agro-tourism is a growing sector of the New Jersey agricultural community. In many instances, this sector is what helps the farms survive. We would like to know how much of the producers' income comes from agro-tourism. I suppose we would have to define what we mean by agro-tourism, and then possibly ask how much income comes from the sale of fresh produce and plants, etc, how much comes from farm-related activities such as hayrides, petting zoo, etc, and how much comes from value-added products such as cheese, pies, jellies, or jams, etc.
2. We would like to know if the farmers have an agro-terrorism response plan for their farm. Do they know what to do in case of an emergency? Do they know about the Best Management Practices (BMP) information that is available through NJDA? Do farmers understand how these BMPs relate to agro-terrorism and other regulatory programs?
3. The nursery/greenhouse, sod, and Christmas tree category is the largest contributor to the annual cash receipts from farm marketing in New Jersey. We were disappointed to hear that the Census of Horticultural Specialties did not receive the funding for 2005. Will there be a nursery survey done in 2005? We believe that this growing sector in New Jersey deserves current and timely information about their industry. What can we expect in the future in terms of collecting horticultural information?

4. Will the Census of Aquaculture be done in 2005-2006?
5. Can we separate meat goats from other goats in the future Census of Agriculture questionnaires and individual goat surveys? Here in New Jersey, we are interested in how the meat goat industry is doing. We would like to be able to say things about meat goats with certainty.
6. New Jersey would like to conduct another Orchard and Vineyard Survey. What will it take to get that accomplished? Can we ask about the number of gallons of wine produced here in New Jersey by our wineries/vineyards? Can we ask how many grapes were processed, and the production tonnage and variety? We would like to have these questions answered either through an Orchard and Vineyard Survey, or we would like to ask production and variety questions on the Census of Agriculture.
7. We would like an additional breakout under the aquaculture section of the Census of Agriculture questionnaire. We would like to add aquatic plants as a separate item, and also break aquatic plants down into food aquatic plants and ornamental aquatic plants.